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THE SECRET HISTORY OF MODERN WITCHCRAFT

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The Legend of Witchcraft and the Origin of Wicca

"The fact is that the instincts of ignorant people invariably find expression in some form of witchcraft. It matters little what the metaphysician or the moralist may inculcate; the animal sticks to his subconscious ideas..." Aleister Crowley The Confessions

"Gather together in the covens as of old, whose number is eleven, that is also my number. Gather together in public, in song and dance and festival. Gather together in secret, be naked and shameless and rejoice in my name."

Liber 49, The Book of Babalon, Jack Parsons, 1946

"If you are on the Path, and see the Buddha walking towards you, kill him." Zen saying, paraphrased slightly

"Previously I never thought of doubting that there were many witches in the world; now, however, when I examine the public record, I find myself believing that there are hardly any..." Father Friedrich von Spee, S.J. , Cautio Criminalis, 1631

[This monograph has a long history. The earliest published draft appeared in a small, independent radical journal during my sojourn in Florida in the middle 1980s. I was at that time closely associated with the OTO, but was not then an initiate member. I had been in close contact with Wiccan and other Neopagan groups at that time for over a decade. I had been a welcome guest in many Neopagan circles, and was widely, although inaccurately, described as a "Neopagan writer" (as in Margot Adler's Drawing Down the Moon). I was frequently published in the journal of the Church of All Worlds, Green Egg. Several years later, a revised and updated version appeared in the first issue of LASH TAL, the journal of Eulis Lodge OTO, which by then I had joined. Since that time, the essay has been repeatedly updated and revised. After I lost my bid for it, the copy of Ye Book of Ye Arte Magical in the Ripley Collection was sold to a private collector with pro Wiccan sympathies (or so I have heard) and has disappeared from view. But not before I got a VERY good look at it. The present revision includes new insights into the early claims concerning Gerald Gardner relative to his status in the OTO. Several letters published by Bill Heidrick, Treasurer General of the OTO, exchanged between Lady Freida Harris and both Karl Germer and Frederic Mellinger immediately after Aleister Crowley's death add new insight. Br. Heidrick was kind enough to provide me with copies of these letters in my preparations for this publication. There is also an important letter by Gerald Gardner to Vernon Symmonds, written during the same period. A copy of the latter was kindly provided by Sabazius X^Ω, the present U.S. Grand Master General of the OTO. I have also had occasion to closely examine the writings of John Whiteside Parsons on the subject of modern witchcraft, written during that same period. It is of more than passing interest

that Ye Book of Ye Arte Magical, the OTO Charter granted to Gerald Gardner by Aleister Crowley, the writings by Parsons on witchcraft, the publication of High Magic's Aid and the public emergence of Wicca all date from the same period, circa 1945-1950.]

Having spent the day musing over the origins of the modern witchcraft, I had a vivid dream. It seemed to be a cold January afternoon, and Aleister Crowley was having Gerald Gardner over to tea. It was 1945, and talk of an early end to the war was in the air. An atmosphere of optimism prevailed in the free world, but the wheezing old Magus was having none of it.

"Nobody is interested in magick any more!" Crowley ejaculated. "My friends on the Continent are dead or in exile, or grown old; the movement in America is in shambles. I've seen my best candidates turn against me....Achad, Regardie -- even that gentleman out in California, what's - his - name, AMORC, the one that made all the money.."

"O, bosh, Crowley," Gardner waved his hand impatiently, "all things considered, you've done pretty well for yourself. Why, you've been called the 'wickedest man in the world' and by more than a few. And you've not, if you'll pardon the impertinence, done too badly with the ladies."

Crowley coughed, tugged on his pipe reflectively. "You know" he finally ventured, "it's like I've been trying to tell this boy Grant. A restrictive Order is not enough. If I had it all to do over again, I would've built a religion for the unwashed masses instead of just a secret society. Why, the opportunities! The women! Poor dimwit kid; he just doesn't get the point. I believe he reads Lovecraft or Poe or one of those other unsavory American fantasists too much. But you, Brother Gardner, you get what is needed."

Gardner smiled. "Precisely. And that is what I have come to propose to you. Take your BOOK OF THE LAW, your GNOSTIC MASS. Add a little razzle-dazzle for the country folk. Why I know these occultists who call themselves 'witches'. They dance around fires naked, get drunk, have a good time. Rosicrucians, I think. Proper English country squires and dames, mostly. If I could persuade you to draw on your long experience and talents, in no time at all we could invent a popular cult that would have beautiful ladies clamoring to let us strip them naked, tie them up and spank their behinds! If, Mr. Crowley, you'll excuse my explicitness."

For all his infirmity, Aleister Crowley almost sprang to his feet, a little of the old energy flashing through his loins. "By George, Gardner, you've got something there, I should think! I could license you to initiate people into the O.T.O. today, and you could form the nucleus of such a group!"

He paced in agitation. "Yes, yes," he mused, half to Gardner, half to himself. "The Book. The Mass. I could write some rituals. An 'ancient book' of magick. A 'book of shadows'. Priestesses, naked girls. Yes. By Jove, yes!"

Great story, but merely a dream, created out of bits and pieces of rumor, history and imagination. Don't be surprised, though, if a year or five years from now you read it as

"gospel" (which is an ironic synonym for `truth') in some new learned text on the fabled history of Wicca. Such is the way all mythologies come into being.

Please don't misunderstand me here; I use the word `mythology' in this context in its aboriginal meaning, and with considerable respect. History is more metaphor than factual accounting at best, and there are myths by which we live and others by which we die. Myths are the dreams and visions which parallel objective history.

To arrive at some perspective on what the modern mythos called, variously, "Wicca", the "Old Religion", "Witchcraft" and "Neopaganism" is, we must firstly make a firm distinction; "witchcraft" in the popular informally defined sense may have little to do with the modern religion that goes by the same name. It has been argued by defenders of and formal apologists for modern Wicca that it is a direct lineal descendent of an ancient, indeed, prehistoric worldwide folk religion.

Some proponents hedge their claims, calling Wicca a "revival" rather than a continuation of an ancient cult. Oddly enough, there may never have been any such cult! The first time I met someone who thought she was a witch, she started going on about being a "blue of the cloak." I should've been warned right then and there.

In fact, as time has passed and the religion has spread, the claims of lineal continuity have tended to be hedged more and more. Thus, we find Dr. Gardner himself, in 1954, stating unambiguously that some witches are descendants "... of a line of priests and priestesses of an old and probably Stone Age religion, who have been initiated in a certain way (received into the circle) and become the recipients of certain ancient learning." (Gardner, *WITCHCRAFT TODAY*, pp. 33-34.)

Stated in its most extreme form, Wicca may be defined as an ancient pagan religious system of beliefs and practices, with a form of `apostolic' succession (that is, with knowledge and ordination handed on linearly from generation to generation), a more or less consistent set of rites and myths, and even a secret holy book of considerable antiquity (The Book of Shadows).

More recent writers, as we have noted, have hedged a good deal on these claims, particularly the latter. Thus we find Stewart Farrar in 1971 musing on the purported ancient text thusly: "Whether, therefore, the whole of the Book of Shadows is post-1897 is anyone's guess. Mine is that, like the Bible, it is a patchwork of periods and sources, and that since it is copied and re-copied by hand, it includes amendments, additions, and stylistic alterations according to the taste of a succession of copiers...Parts of it I sense to be genuinely old; other parts suggest modern interpolation..." (Farrar, *WHAT WITCHES DO*, pp. 34-35) As we shall discover presently, there appear to be no genuinely old copies of the Book of Shadows.

Still, as to the mythos, Farrar informs us that the "two personifications of witchcraft are the Horned God and the Mother Goddess..." (ibid., p 29) and that the "Horned God is not the Devil, and never has been. If today `Satanist' covens do exist, they are not witches but a sick fringe, delayed-reaction victims of a centuries-old Church propaganda in which even intelligent Christians no longer believe..." (ibid., p 32).

If one is then to protest, `very well, some case might be made for the Horned God being mistaken for the Christian Devil (or should that be the other way around?), but what record, prior to the advent 50 years ago of modern Wicca via Gerald Gardner, do we have of the survival of a mother goddess image from ancient times?

Wiccan apologists frequently refer to the (apparently isolated) tenth century Church document which states that "some wicked women, perverted by the Devil, seduced by the illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and profess themselves in the hours of the night to ride upon certain beasts with Diana, the goddess of pagans, or with Herodias, and an innumerable multitude of women, and in the silence of the dead of night to traverse great spaces of earth, and to obey her commands as of their mistress, and to be summoned to her service on certain nights." (Quoted in Valiente, *WITCHCRAFT FOR TOMORROW*, Hale, 1978, p 32. and by Kramer and Sprenger in the Montague Summers' translation of *THE HAMMER OF WITCHES*) This document dates from early post-Roman Europe. Some form of intact quasi pagan folk beliefs did survive through this period; even as late as the High Middle Ages it survived among the Vikings of Northern Europe. Human Sacrifice was practiced at Old Upsala well into the High Middle Ages. There has, however, never been any evidence of a link to modern Wicca, other than a literary one.

Farrar, for his part, explains the lack of references to a goddess in the testimony at the infamous witch trials by asserting that "the judges ignored the Goddess, being preoccupied with the Satan-image of the God.." (*WHAT WITCHES DO*, p 33). But it is the evidence of that reign of terror which lasted from roughly 1484 to 1692 which brings the whole idea of a surviving religious cult into question. Authorities such as Dr. Margaret Murray to the contrary, the conventional wisdom on the witch burning mania which swept like a plague over much of Europe during the transition from medieval world to modern is that it was JUST that; a mania, a delusion in the minds of Christian clergymen and state authorities; that is, there were no witches, only the innocent victims of the witch hunt. Further, this humanist argument goes, the `witchcraft' of Satanic worship, broomstick riding, of Sabats and Devil-marks, was a rather late invention, borrowing but little from remaining memories of actual pre Christian paganism. We have seen that the infamous inquisitors Kramer and Springer knew full well the early account mentioned above, and classical paganism as a literary knowledge has never been forgotten. We have seen a resurrection of this mania in the 1980s flurry over `Satanic sacrificial' cults, with as little evidence. The story still gets retold in the '90s on occasion, in fresh form.

"The concept of the heresy of witchcraft was frankly regarded as a new invention, both by the theologians and by the public," writes Dr. Rossell Hope Robbins in *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WITCHCRAFT & DEMONOLOGY*, (Crown, 1959, p.9)"Having to hurdle an early church law, the Canon Episcopi, which said in effect that belief in witchcraft was superstitious and heretical, the inquisitors caviled by arguing that the witchcraft of the Canon Episcopi and the witchcraft of the Inquisition were different..."

The evidence extracted under the most gruesome and repeated tortures resemble the Wiccan religion of today in only the most cursory fashion. Though Wicca may have been framed with the "confessions" extracted by victims of the inquisitors in mind, those

"confessions" --- which are more than suspect, to begin with, bespeak a cult of devil worshipers dedicated to evil.

One need only read a few of the accounts of the time to realize that, had there been at the time a religion of the Goddess and God, of seasonal circles and The Book of Shadows, such would likely have been blurted out by the victims, and more than once. The agonies of the accused were, almost literally, beyond the imagination of those of us who have been fortunate enough to escape them.

The witch mania went perhaps unequaled in the annals of crimes against humanity en masse until the Hitlerian brutality of our own century. But, no such confessions were forthcoming, though the wretches accused, before the torture was done, would also be compelled to condemn their own parents, spouses, loved ones, even children. They confessed, and to anything the inquisitors wished, anything to stop or reduce the pain.

A Priest, probably at risk to his own life, recorded testimony in the 1600s that reflected the reality underlying the forced "confessions" of "witches". Rev. Michael Stapirius records, for example, this comment from one "confessed witch": "I never dreamed that by means of the torture a person could be brought to the point of telling such lies as I have told. I am not a witch, and I have never seen the devil, and still I had to plead guilty myself and denounce others...." All but one copy of Father Stapirius' book were destroyed, and little wonder.

A letter smuggled from a German burgomaster, Johannes Junius, to his daughter in 1628, is as telling as it is painful even to read. His hands had been virtually destroyed in the torture, and he wrote only with great agony and no hope. "When at last the executioner led me back to the cell, he said to me, 'Sir, I beg you, for God's sake, confess something, whether it be true or not. Invent something, for you cannot endure the torture which you will be put to; and, even if you bear it all, yet you will not escape, not even if you were an earl, but one torture will follow another until you say you are a witch. Not before that,' he said, 'will they let you go, as you may see by all their trials, for one is just like another...' " (ibid., pp. 12-13)

For the graspers at straws, we may find an occasional line in a "confession" which is intriguing, as in the notations on the "confession" of one woman from Germany dated in late 1637. After days of unspeakable torment, wherein the woman confesses under pain, recants when the pain is removed, only to be moved by more pain to confess again, she is asked: "How did she influence the weather? She does not know what to say and can only whisper, Oh, Heavenly Queen, protect me!"

Was the victim calling upon "the Goddess"? Or, as seems more likely, upon that aforementioned transfiguration of all ancient goddesses in Christian mythology, the Virgin Mary. One more quote from Dr. Robbins, and I will cease to parade late medieval history before you.

It comes from yet another priest, Father Cornelius Loos, who observed, in 1592 that "Wretched creatures are compelled by the severity of the torture to confess things they have never done, and so by cruel butchery innocent lives are taken....." (ibid., p 16). The

"evidence" of the witch trials indicates, on the whole, neither the Satanism the church and state would have us believe, nor the pagan survivals now claimed by modern Wicca; rather, they suggest only fear, greed, human brutality carried out to bizarre extremes that have few parallels in all of history. But, the brutality is not that of 'witches' nor even of 'Satanists' but rather that of the Christian Church, and the government.

What, then, are we to make of modern Wicca? It must, of course, be observed as an aside that in a sense witchcraft or "wisecraft" has, indeed, been with us from the dawn of time, not as a coherent religion or set of practices and beliefs, but as the folk magic and medicine that stretches back to early, possibly Paleolithic tribal shamans on to modern China's so-called "barefoot doctors".

In another sense, we can also say that ceremonial magick, as I have previously noted, has had a place in history for a very long time, and both these ancient systems of belief and practice have intermingled in the lore of modern Wicca, as apologists are quick to claim.

But, to an extent, this misses the point and skirts an essential question anyone has the right to ask about modern Wicca -- namely, did Wicca exist as a coherent creed, a distinct form of spiritual expression, prior to the 1940s; that is, prior to the meeting of minds between the old magus and venerable prophet of the occult world Aleister Crowley, and the first popularizer, if not outright inventor of modern Wicca, Gerald Brosseau Gardner?

There is certainly no doubt that bits and pieces of ancient paganism survived into modern times in folklore and, for that matter, in the very practices and beliefs of Christianity.

Further, there appears to be some evidence that 'Old George' Pickingill and others were practicing some form of Satanic folk magick as early as the latter part of the last century, though even this has recently been brought into question. Wiccan writers have made much of this in the past, but just what 'Old George' was into is subject to much debate.

Doreen Valiente, an astute Wiccan writer and one-time intimate of the late Dr. Gardner (and, in fact, the author of some rituals now thought by others to be of "ancient origin"), says of Pickingill that so "fierce was 'Old George's dislike of Christianity that he would even collaborate with avowed Satanists..." (TOMORROW, p 20). What George Pickingill was doing is simply not clear.

He is said to have had some interaction with a host of figures in the occult revival of the late nineteenth century, including perhaps even Crowley and his teacher Bennett. It seems possible that Gardner, about the time of meeting Crowley, had some involvement with groups stemming from Pickingill's earlier activities, but it is only AFTER Crowley and Gardner meet that we begin to see anything resembling the modern spiritual communion that has become known as Wicca.

"Witches," wrote Gardner in 1954, "are consummate leg-pullers; they are taught it as part of their stock-in-trade." (WITCHCRAFT TODAY, p 27) Modern apologists both of Aleister Crowley AND Gerald Gardner have taken on such serious tones as well as pretensions that they may be missing places where tongues are firmly jutting against cheeks.

Both men were believers in fleshly fulfillment, not only as an end in itself but, as in the Tantric Yoga of the East, as a means of spiritual attainment. A certain prudishness has crept into the practices of postGardnerian Wiccans, especially in America since the 1960s, along with a certain feminist revisionism. This has succeeded to a considerable extent in converting a libertine sex cult into a rather staid Neopuritanism.

The original Gardnerian current is still well enough known and widely enough in vogue (in Britain and Ireland especially) that one can venture to assert that what Gardnerian Wicca is all about is the same thing Crowley was attempting with a more narrow, more intellectual constituency with the magical orders under his direct influence.

These Orders had flourished for some time, but by the time Crowley` officially' met Gardner in the 1940s, much of the former's lifelong efforts had, if not totally disintegrated, at least were then operating at a diminished and diminishing level.

Through his long and fascinating career as Magus and organizer, there is some reason to believe that Crowley periodically may have wished for, or even attempted to create a more populist expression of magical religion. The Gnostic Mass, which Crowley wrote fairly early-on, had come since his death to somewhat fill this function through the OTO-connected but (for a time) semi-autonomous Gnostic Catholic Church (EGC).

As we shall see momentarily, one of Crowley's key followers was publishing manifestos forecasting the revival of witchcraft at the same time Gardner was being chartered by Crowley to organize an OTO encampment. The OTO itself, since Crowley's time, has taken on a more popular image, and is somewhat less elitist and more oriented towards international organizational efforts, thanks largely to the work under the Caliphate of the late Grady McMurtry. This contrasts sharply with the very internalized OTO that barely survived during the McCarthy Era, when the late Karl Germer was in charge, and the OTO turned inward for two decades. (On the other hand, Germer when seen less as an active Grand Master and more as a Conservator of ideas and rites in a "dark age" comes off a good deal better.)

The famous Ancient and Mystic Order of the Rose Cross (AMORC), the highly successful mail-order spiritual fellowship, was an OTO offspring in Crowley's time. It has been claimed that Kenneth Grant and Aleister Crowley were discussing relatively radical changes in the Ordo Templi Orientis at approximately the same time that Gardner and Crowley were interactive. Indeed, Crowley's correspondence and conversations with his eventual successor Grady McMurtry suggest that in his last years the old Magus envisioned the need for a new generation of leaders with new ideas.

Though Wiccan writers give some lip service (and, no doubt, some sincere credence) to the notion that the validity of Wiccan ideas doesn't depend upon its lineage, the suggestion that Wicca is -- or, at least, started out to be, essentially a late attempt at popularizing the secrets of ritual and sexual magick Crowley promulgated through the OTO and his writings, seems to evoke nervousness, if not hostility.

One notes gross animosity or a certain culpable nervousness. We hear from Wiccan writer and leader Raymond Buckland that one "of the suggestions made is that Aleister Crowley

wrote the rituals . . . but no convincing evidence has been presented to back this assertion and, to my mind, it seems extremely unlikely . . ." (Gardner, *ibid.*, introduction) The Wiccan rituals I have seen DO have much of Crowley in them. Yet, as we shall see in presently, the explanation that 'Crowley wrote the rituals for Gardner' turns out to be somewhat in error. But it is on the right track.

Doreen Valiente attempts to invoke Crowley's alleged infirmity at the time of his acquaintance with Gardner:

" It has been stated by Francis King in his RITUAL MAGIC IN ENGLAND that Aleister Crowley was paid by Gerald Gardner to write the rituals of Gardner's new witch cult...Now, Gerald Gardner never met Aleister Crowley until the very last years of the latter's life, when he was a feeble old man living at a private hotel in Hastings, being kept alive by injections of drugs... If, therefore, Crowley really invented these rituals in their entirety, they must be about the last thing he ever wrote. Was this enfeebled and practically dying man really capable of such a tour de force? "

The obvious answer, as the late Dr. Israel Regardie's introduction to the posthumous collection of Crowley's letters, *MAGICK WITHOUT TEARS*, implies, would seem to be yes. Crowley continued to produce extraordinary material almost to the end of his life, and much of what I have seen of the "Wiccan Crowley" is, in any case, of earlier origin.

Gerald Gardner is himself not altogether silent on the subject. In *WITCHCRAFT TODAY* (p 47), Gardner asks himself, with what degree of irony one can only guess at, who, in modern times, could have invented the Wiccan rituals. "The only man I can think of who could have invented the rites," he offers, "was the late Aleister Crowley....possibly he borrowed things from the cult writings, or more likely someone may have borrowed expressions from him...." A few legs may be being pulled here, and perhaps more than a few.

As a prophet ahead of his time, as a poet and dreamer, Crowley is one of the outstanding figures of the twentieth (or any) century. As an organizer, he was almost as much of a calamity as he was at managing his own finances...and personal life. As I understand the liberatory nature of the magical path, one would do well to see the difference between Crowley the prophet of Thelema and Crowley the insolvent and awkward administrator.

Crowley very much lacked the common touch; Gardner was above all things a popularizer. Both men have been reviled as lecherous "dirty old men" -- Crowley, as a seducer of women and a homosexual, a drug addict and 'Satanist' rolled together.

Gardner was, they would have it, a voyeur, exhibitionist and bondage freak with a 'penchant for ritual' to borrow a line from *THE STORY OF O*. Both were, in reality, spiritual libertines, ceremonial magicians who did not shy away from the awesome force of human sexuality and its potential for spiritual transformation as well as physical gratification.

I will not say with finality at this point whether Wicca is an outright invention of these two divine mountebanks. If so, more power to them, and to those who truly follow in

their path. I do know that, around 1945, Crowley met with Gardner , and gave him license to organize an OTO encampment. This was, as it turns out, a serious effort by Crowley to establish a new OTO presence in Britain. As late as May of 1947 we have seen letters from Crowley to one of his key associates urging the latter to send his followers in London to Dr. Gardner so that they might receive proper initiation in OTO through Gardner's OTO Camp, which Crowley anticipated being in operation in a matter of weeks. After Crowley's death his close collaborator, Lady Harris, thought Gardner to be Crowley's successor as head of the OTO in Europe. Gardner claimed as much himself. See below.

Shortly thereafter, the public face of Wicca came into view, and that is what I know of the matter: I presently have in my possession Gardner's certificate of license to organize said OTO camp, signed and sealed by Aleister Crowley. The certificate and its import are examined in connection with my personal search for the original Book of Shadows in the next section of this narrative.

For now, though, let us note in the years since Crowley chartered Gardner to organize a magical encampment, Wicca has both grown in popularity and become, to my mind, something far less REAL than either Gardner or Crowley could have wanted or foreseen. Wherever they came from, the rites and practices which came from or through Gerald Gardner were strong, and tapped into that archetypal reality, that level of consciousness beneath the mask of polite society and conventional wisdom which is the function of True Magick.

At a popular level, this was the Tantric Sex Magick of the West. Whether this primordial access has been lost to us will depend on the awareness, the awakening or lack thereof among practitioners of the near to middle-near future. Carried to its end Gardnerian practices, like Crowley's magick, are not merely exotic; they are, in the truest sense, subversive.

Practices that WORK are of value, whether they are two years old or two thousand. Practices, myths, institutions and obligations which, on the other hand, may be infinitely ancient are of no value at all UNLESS they work.

The Devil, you say

Before we move on, though, in light of the furor over real and imagined "Satanism" that has overtaken parts of the popular press in recent years, I would feel a bit remiss in this account if I did not take momentary note of that other strain of left-handed occult mythology, Satanism. Wiccans are correct when they say that modern Wicca is not Satanic, that Satanism is "reverse Christianity" whereas Wicca is a separate, non Christian religion.

Still, it should be noted, so much of our society has been grounded in the repressiveness and authoritarian moralism of what passes for Christianity that a liberal dose of "counterChristianity" is to be expected. The Pat Robertsons of the world make possible the Anton LeVays. In the long history of repressive religion, a certain fable of Satanism has arisen. It constitutes a mythos of its own. No doubt, misguided 'copycat' fanatics have

sometimes misused this mythos, in much the same way that Charles Manson misused the music and culture of the 1960s.

True occult initiates have always regarded the Ultimate Reality as beyond all names and description. Named 'deities' are, therefore, largely symbols. "Isis" is a symbol of the long-denied female component of deity to some occultists. "Pan" or "The Horned God" or "Set" or even "Satan" are symbols of unconscious, repressed sexuality. To the occultist, there is no Devil, no "god of evil." There is, ultimately, only the Ain Sof Aur of the Qabala; the limitless light of which we are but a frozen spark. Evil, in this system, is the mere absence of light. All else is illusion.

The goal of the occult path of initiation is BALANCE. In Freemasonry and High Magick, the symbols of the White Pillar and Black Pillar represent this balance between conscious and unconscious forces.

In Gardnerian Wicca, the Goddess and Horned God - and the Priestess and Priest, represent that balance. There is nothing, nothing whatever of pacts with the "Devil" or the worship of evil in any of this; that belongs to misguided ex Christians who have been given the absurd fundamentalist Sunday school notion that one must choose the exoteric Christian version of God, or choose the Devil. Islam, Judaism and even Catholicism have at one time or another been thought "Satanic," and occultists have merely played on this bigoted symbolism, not subscribed to it.

As we have seen, Wicca since Gardner's time has been watered down in many of its expressions into a kind of mushy white-light 'New Age' religion, with far less of the strong sexuality characteristic of Gardnerianism, though, also, sometimes with less pretense as well.

In any event, Satanism has popped up now and again through much of the history of the Christian Church. The medieval witches were not likely to have been Satanists, as the Church would have it, but, as we have seen, neither were they likely to have been "witches" in the Wiccan sense, either.

The Hellfire Clubs of the Eighteenth Century were mockingly Satanic, and groups like the Process Church of the Final Judgment do, indeed, have Satanic elements in their (one should remember) essentially Christian theology.

Aleister Crowley, ever theatrical, was prone to use Satanic symbolism in much the same way, tongue jutting in cheek, as he was given to saying that he "sacrificed hundreds of children each year," that is, that he was sexually active. Crowley once called a press conference at the foot of the Statue of Liberty, where he announced that he was burning his British Passport to protest Britain's involvement in World War One. He tossed an empty envelope into the water.

The most popular form of "counter Christianity" to emerge in modern times, though, was Anton Szandor LaVey's San Francisco-based Church of Satan, founded April 30, 1966. LaVey's Church enjoyed an initial burst of press interest, grew to a substantial size, and appeared to maintain itself during the cultural drought of the 1970s. But LaVey's books,

THE SATANIC BIBLE and THE SATANIC RITUALS, have remained in print for many years, and his ideas seem to be enjoying a renewal of interest, especially among younger people, punks and heavy metal fans with a death-wish mostly, beginning in the middle years of the 1980s. By that time the Church of Satan had been largely succeeded by the Temple of Set. This is pure theater or psychodrama; more in the nature of psychotherapy than religion.

It is interesting to note Francis King's observation that before the Church of Satan began LaVey was involved in an occult group which included, among others, underground film maker Kenneth Anger, a Person well known in Crowlean circles. Of the rites of the Church of Satan, King states that "...most of its teachings and magical techniques were somewhat vulgarized versions of those of Aleister Crowley's Ordo Templi Orientis ." (MAN MYTH AND MAGIC, p 3204.) To which we might add that, as with the OTO, the rites of the Church of Satan and Temple of Set are manifestly potent, but hardly criminal or murderous.

LaVey, like Gardner and unlike Crowley, appears to have had "the common touch" -- perhaps rather more so than Gardner. This attraction was, however, caught up in the hedonism of the 1970s, and has little to say at the end of the 20th Century.

I determined to trace the Wiccan rumor to its source. As we shall see, in the very year I "fell" into being a Gnostic Bishop, I also fell into the original charters, rituals and paraphernalia of Wicca.

THE CHARTER AND THE BOOK

Being A Radical Revisionist History of the Origins of the Modern Witch Cult and The Book of Shadows.

"G. B. Gardner . . . is head of the O.T.O. in Europe." Lady Freida Harris, letter to Karl Germer, January 2, 1948

"It was one of the secret doctrines of paganism that the Sun was the source, not only of light, but of life The invasion of classical beliefs by the religions of Syria and Egypt which were principally solar, gradually affected the conception of Apollo, and there is a certain later identification of him with the suffering God of Christianity, Freemasonry and similar cults"

Aleister Crowley in Astrology, 1974

" if GBG and Crowley only knew each other for a short year or two, do you think that would be long enough for them to become such good friends that gifts of personal value would be exchanged several times, and that GBG would have been able to acquire the vast majority of Crowley's effects after his death?"

Merlin the Enchanter, personal letter, 1986

"...On the floor before the altar, he remembers a sword with a flat cruciform brass hilt, and a well-worn manuscript book of rituals - the hereditary Book of Shadows, which he will have to copy out for himself in the days to come..." Stewart Farrar in *What Witches Do*, 1971

"...the Gardnerian Book of Shadows is one of the key factors in what has become a far bigger and more significant movement than Gardner can have envisaged; so historical interest alone would be enough reason for defining it while first-hand evidence is still available..."

Janet and Stewart Farrar in *The Witches' Way*, 1984

"It has been alleged that a Book of Shadows in Crowley's hand-writing was formerly exhibited in Gerald's Museum of Witchcraft on the Isle of Man. I can only say I never saw this on either of the two occasions when I stayed with Gerald and Donna Gardner on the island. The large, handwritten book depicted in *Witchcraft Today* is not in Crowley's handwriting, but Gerald's..." Doreen Valiente in *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, 1978

"Aidan Kelly. . . labels the entire Wiccan revival 'Gardnerian Witchcraft . . . ' The reasoning and speculation in Aidan's book are intricate. Briefly, his main argument depends on his discovery of one of Gardner's working notebooks, *Ye Book of Ye Art Magical*, which is in possession of Ripley International, Ltd....." Margot Adler in *Drawing Down the Moon*, 1979

WAITING FOR THE MAN FROM CANADA

I was, for the third time in four years, waiting a bit nervously for the Canadian executive with the original Book of Shadows in the ramshackle office of Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum.

"They're at the jail," a smiling secretary-type explained, "but we've called them and they should be back over here to see you in just a few minutes."

The jail ? Ah, St. Augustine, Florida. "The Old Jail," was the 'nation's oldest city's' second most tasteless tourist trap, complete with cage-type cells and a mock gallows. For a moment I allowed myself to play in my head with the vision of Norm Deska, Ripley Operations Vice President and John Turner, the General Manager of Ripley's local operation and the guy who'd bought the Gerald Gardner collection from Gardner's niece, Monique Wilson, sitting in the slammer. But no, Turner apparently had just been showing Deska the town. I straightened my ice cream suit for the fiftieth time, and suppressed the

comment. We were talking BIG history here, and big bucks, too. I gulped. The original Book of Shadows. Maybe.

It had started years before. One of the last people in America to be a fan of carnival sideshows, I was anxious to take another opportunity to go through the almost archetypally seedy old home that housed the original Ripley's Museum.

I had known that Ripley had, in the nineteen seventies, acquired the Gardner stuff, but as far as I knew it was all located at their Tennessee resort museum. I think I'd heard they'd closed it down. By then, the social liberalism of the early seventies was over, and witchcraft and sorcery were no longer in keeping with a 'family style' museum. It featured a man with a candle in his head, a Tantric skull drinking cup and freak show stuff like that, but, that, apparently, was deemed suitable family fun.

I was a bit surprised, then, when I discovered some of the Gardner stuff - including an important historical document, for sale in the gift shop, in a case just opposite the little alligators that have "St. Augustine, Florida - America's Oldest City" stickered on their plastic bellies for the folks back home to use as a paper-weight. The price tags on the occult stuff, however, were way out of my range.

Back again, three years later, and I decided, what the hell, so I asked the cashier about the stuff still gathering dust in the glass case, and it was like I'd pushed some kind of button.

Out comes Mr. Turner, the manager, who whisks us off to a store room which is filled, FILLED, I tell you, with parts of the Gardner collection, much of it, if not "for sale" as such, at least available for negotiation. Mr. Turner told us about acquiring the collection when he was manager of Ripley's Blackpool operation, how it had gone over well in the U.S. at first, but had lost popularity and was now relegated for the most part to storage status.

Visions of sugarplums danced in my head. There were many treasures here, but the biggest plum of all, I thought, was not surprisingly, not to be seen.

I'd heard all kinds of rumors about the Book of Shadows over the years, many of them conflicting, all of them intriguing. Rumor #1, of course, is that which accompanied the birth (or, depending on how one looked at it, the revival) of modern Wicca, the contemporary successor of ancient fertility cults.

It revolved around elemental rituals, secret rites of passage and a mythos of goddess and god that seemed attractive to me as a psychologically valid alternative to the austere, antisexual moralism of Christianity. The Book of Shadows, in this context, was the 'holy book' of Wicca, copied out by hand by new initiates of the cult with a history stretching back at least to the era of witch burnings.

Rumor #2, which I had tended to credit, had it that Gerald Gardner, the 'father of modern Wicca' had paid Aleister Crowley in his final years to write the Book of Shadows,

perhaps whole cloth. The rumor's chief exponent was the respected historian of the occult, Francis King.

Rumor #3 had it that Gardner had written the Book himself, which others had since copied and/or stolen.

To the contrary, said rumor #4, Gardner's Museum had contained an old, even ancient copy of the Book of Shadows, proving its antiquity.

In more recent years modern Wiccans have tended to put some distance between themselves and Gardner, just as Gardner, for complex reasons, tended to distance himself in the early years of Wicca (circa 1944-1954) from the blatant sexual magick of Aleister Crowley, "the wickedest man in the world" by some accounts, and from Crowley's organization, the Ordo Templi Orientis . Why Gardner chose to do this is speculative, but I've got some idea. But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

While Turner showed me a blasphemous cross shaped from the body of two nude women (created for the 18th century infamous "Hellfire Clubs" in England and depicted in the MAN MYTH AND MAGIC encyclopedia;I bought it, of course) and a statue of Beelzebub from the dusty Garderian archives, a thought occurred to me. " You know," I suggested, "if you ever, in all this stuff, happen across a copy of The Book of Shadows in the handwriting of Aleister Crowley, it would be of considerable historical value."

I understated the case. It would be like finding The Book of Mormon in Joseph Smith's hand, or finding the original Ten Commandments written not by God Himself, but by Moses, pure and simple. (Better still, eleven commandments, with a margin note, "first draft.") I didn't really expect anything to come of it, and in the months ahead, it didn't.

In the meantime, I had managed to acquire the interesting document I first mistook for Gerald Gardner's (long acknowledged) initiation certificate into Crowley's Thelemic magical Ordo Templi Orientis . To my eventual surprise, I discovered that, not only was this not a simple initiation certificate for the Minerval (probationary-lowest) degree, but, to the contrary, was a Charter for Gardner to begin his own encampment of the O.T.O., and to initiate members into the O.T.O.

In the document, furthermore, Gardner is referred to as "Prince of Jerusalem" --that is, he is acknowledged to be a Fourth Degree Perfect Initiate in the Order. This, needless to say, would usually imply years of dedicated training. Though Gardner had claimed Fourth Degree O.T.O. status as early as publication of High Magic's Aid,(and claimed even higher status in one edition*) this runs somewhat contrary to both generally held Wiccan and contemporary O.T.O. orthodox understandings that the O.T.O. was then fallow in England.

At the time the document was written, most maintained, Gardner could have known Crowley for only a brief period, and was not himself deeply involved in the O.T.O. The document is undated but probably was drawn up around 1945.

As I said, it was once understood that no viable chapter of the O.T.O. was supposed to exist in England at that time; the only active chapter was in California, and is the direct antecedent of the contemporary authentic Ordo Templi Orientis. Karl Germer, Crowley's immediate successor, had barely escaped death in a Concentration Camp during the War, his mere association with Crowley being tantamount to a death sentence. But Crowley himself clearly expected Gardner to establish an OTO Camp, and was referring followers to Gardner for initiation as late as 1947.

The German OTO had been largely destroyed by the Nazis, along with other Freemasonic organizations, and Crowley himself was in declining health and power, the English OTO virtually dead. A provincial Swiss branch existed, but was highly insular and tending towards schism. The Charter also displayed other irregularities of a revealing nature. Though the signature and seals are certainly those of Crowley, the text is in the decorative hand of Gerald Gardner! The complete text reads as follows: Do what thou wilt shall be the law. We Baphomet X Degree Ordo Templi Orientis Sovereign Grand Master General of All English speaking countries of the Earth do hereby authorise our Beloved Son Scire (Dr.G,B,Gardner,) Prince of Jerusalem to constitute a camp of the Ordo Templi Orientis, in the degree Minerval. Love is the Law, Love under will. Witness my hand and seal Baphomet X o Leaving aside the misquotation from The Book of the Law ("Do what thou wilt shall be the Law" instead of Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law"), which got by me for some months and probably got by Crowley when it was presented to him for signature, the document is definitely authentic. It hung for some time in Gardner's museum, possibly giving rise, as we shall see, to the rumor that Crowley wrote the Book of Shadows for Gardner. According to Doreen Valiente, and to Col. Lawrence as well, the museum's descriptive pamphlet says of this document:

"The collection includes a Charter granted by Aleister Crowley to G.B. Gardner (the Director of this Museum) to operate a Lodge of Crowley's fraternity, the Ordo Templi Orientis. (The Director would like to point out, however, that he has never used this Charter and has no intention of doing so, although to the best of his belief he is the only person in Britain possessing such a Charter from Crowley himself; Crowley was a personal friend of his, and gave him the Charter because he liked him." This was probably written well after Wicca was developed in the form it is today identified with, at least in Britain. As I point out elsewhere, Crowley clearly took the Charter seriously, even openly envisioning it extending to a Lodge to do the entire "Man of Earth Series" of OTO initiations eventually. Gardner, for his part, places a different connotation on the Charter at an earlier time, giving out the impression that it makes him the Grand Master of the OTO in Europe.

Col. Lawrence ("Merlin the Enchanter"), in a letter to me dated 6 December, 1986, adds that this appeared in Gardner's booklet, *The Museum of Magic and Witchcraft*. The explanation for the curious wording of the text, taking, as Dr. Gardner does, great pains to distance himself from Crowley and the OTO, may be hinted at in that the booklet suggests that this display in the "new upper gallery" (page 24) was put out at a relatively late date when, as we shall discover, Gardner was making himself answerable to the demands of the new witch cult and not the long-dead Crowley and (then) relatively moribund OTO.

Now, the "my friend Aleister" ploy might explain the whole thing. Perhaps, as some including Ms. Valiente believe, Aleister Crowley was desperate in his last years to hand on what he saw as his legacy to someone. He recklessly handed out his literary estate, perhaps gave contradictory instruction to various of his remaining few devotees (e.g. Kenneth Grant, Grady McMurtry, Karl Germer), and may have given Gardner an "accelerated advancement" in his order.

There is, however, certainly reason to dispute this. I have read Crowley's letters to Jack Parsons and to Karl Germer, and others, including the more famous letters published as *MAGICK WITHOUT TEARS*, and his now celebrated authorizations to Grady McMurtry -- all very late writings indeed, as well as his Last Will and Testament dated June 19, 1947, only six months prior to his death, and Crowley seems intent upon an orderly process of transition of his minor financial estate and, more importantly, his substantial literary estate, to the OTO leadership which, he leaves no doubt in his Will, falls to Germer, then Grand Treasurer General of the OTO. To the end he continues to critique what he sees as unsound thinking (letters to Parsons and Germer in 1946), and to speak of moving to California to be with Agape Lodge, by then the remaining centerpiece of the OTO, but also referring to Gardner's Camp in London as a virtual accomplished fact.

Ms. Valiente, a devoted Wiccan who is also a dedicated seeker after the historical truth, mentions also the claim made by the late Gerald Yorke to her that Gardner had paid Crowley a substantial sum for the document. In a letter to me dated 28th August, 1986, Ms. Valiente tells of a meeting with Yorke "...in London many years ago and mentioned Gerald's O.T.O. Charter to him, whereon he told me, 'Well, you know, Gerald Gardner paid old Crowley about (\$1500) or so for that...' This may or may not be correct..." Money or friendship do not explain the Charter.

I used to have a Thelemic acquaintance who, having advanced well along the path of Kenneth Grant's spurious version of the OTO, went back to square one with the unquestionably authentic Grady McMurtry OTO. Over a period of years of substantial effort, he made his way to the IV° 'plus' status implied by Gardner's "Prince of Jerusalem" designation in the charter, and has since gone beyond.

I can tell you of my own knowledge that becoming a Companion of the Royal Arch of Enoch, Perfect Initiate, Prince of Jerusalem and Chartered Initiator is, ordinarily, a long and arduous task in the OTO.

Gardner was in the habit, after the public career of Wicca emerged in the 1950s, of downgrading any Crowleyite associations out of his past, and, as Janet and Stewart Farrar reveal in *The Witches' Way* (1984, p3) there are three distinct versions of the Book of Shadows in Gerald Gardner's handwriting which incorporate successively less material from Crowley's writings, though the last (termed "Text C" and cowritten with Doreen Valiente after 1953) is still heavily influenced by Crowley and the OTO.

Ms. Valiente has recently uncovered a copy of an old occult magazine contemporary with High Magic's Aid and from the same publisher, which discusses an ancient Indian document called "The Book of Shadows" but apparently totally unrelated to the Wiccan

book of the same name. Valiente acknowledges that the earliest text by Gardner known to her was untitled, though she refers to it as a "Book of Shadows."

It seems suspicious timing; did Gardner take over the title from his publisher's magazine? Ms. Valiente observed to me that the "...eastern Book of Shadows does not seem to have anything to do with witchcraft at all....is this where old Gerald first found the expression "The Book of Shadows" and adopted it as a more poetical name for a magical manuscript than, say 'The Grimoire' or 'The Black Book'....I don't profess to know the answer; but I doubt if this is mere coincidence...."

The claim is frequently made by those who wish to 'salvage' a preGardnerian source of Wiccan materials that there is a 'core' of 'authentic' materials. But, as the Farrars' recently asserted, the portions of the Book of Shadows "...which changed least between Texts A, B and C were naturally the three initiation rituals; because these, above all, would be the traditional elements which would have been carefully preserved, probably for centuries...."

But what does one mean by "traditional materials?" The three initiation rites, now much-described in print, all smack heavily of the crypto-Freemasonic ritual of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the OTO, and the various esoteric NeoRosicrucian groups that abounded in Britain from about 1885 on, and which were, it is widely known, the fountainhead of much that is associated with Gardner's friend Crowley.

The Third Degree ritual, perhaps Wicca's ultimate rite, is, essentially, a nonsymbolic Gnostic Mass, that beautiful, evocative, erotic and esoteric ritual written and published by Crowley in the Equinox, after attending a Russian Orthodox Mass in the early part of this century. The Gnostic Mass has had far-reaching influence, and it would appear that the Wiccan Third Degree is one of the most blatant examples of that influence.

Take, for example, this excerpt from what is perhaps the most intimate, most secret and most sublime moment in the entire repertoire of Wicca rituals, the nonsymbolic (that is, overtly sexual) Great Rite of the Third Degree initiation, as related by Janet and Stewart Farrar in *The Witches' Way* (p.34):

The Priest continues: 'O Secret of Secrets, That art hidden in the being of all lives, Not thee do we adore, For that which adoreth is also thou. Thou art That, and That am I. [Kiss I am the flame that burns in the heart of every man, And in the core of every star. I am life, and the giver of life. Yet therefore is the knowledge of me the knowledge of death. I am alone, the Lord within ourselves, Whose name is Mystery of Mysteries.'

Let us be unambiguous as to the importance in Wicca of this ritual; as the Farrars' put it (p.31) "Third degree initiation elevates a witch to the highest of the three grades of the Craft. In a sense, a third-degree witch is fully independent, answerable only to the Gods and his or her own conscience..." In short, in a manner of speaking this is all that Wicca can offer a devotee.

With this in mind, observe the following, from Aleister Crowley's Gnostic Mass, first published in *The Equinox* over 80 years ago and routinely performed (albeit in the symbolic form) by me and by many other Bishops, Priests, Priestesses and Deacons in the

OTO and Ecclesia Gnostica (EGC) today. The following is excerpted from *Gems From the Equinox*, p. 372, but is widely available in published form: The Priest. O secret of secrets that art hidden in the being of all that lives, not Thee do we adore, for that which adoreth is also Thou. Thou art That, and That am I. I am the flame that burns in every heart of man, and in the core of every star. I am Life, and the giver of Life; yet therefore is the knowledge of me the knowledge of death. I am alone; there is no God where I am.

So, then, where, apart from Freemasonry and the Thelemic tradition of Crowley and the OTO, is the "traditional material" some Wiccan writers seem to seek with near desperation? I am not trying to be sarcastic in the least, but even commonplace self-references used among Wiccans today, such as "the Craft" or the refrain "so mote it be" are lifted straight out of Freemasonry (see, for example, Duncan's *Ritual of Freemasonry*). And, as Doreen Valiente notes in her letter to me mentioned before, "...of course old Gerald was also a member of the Co-Masons, and an ordinary Freemason..." as well as an OTO member.

THE REAL ORIGIN OF WICCA

We must dismiss with some respect the assertion, put forth by Margot Adler and others, that "Wicca no longer adheres to the orthodox mythos of the Book of Shadows."

Many, if not most of those who have been drawn to Wicca in the last three decades came to it under the spell (if I may so term it) of the legend of ancient Wicca. If that legend is false, then while reformists and revisionist apologists (particularly the peculiar hybrid spawned in the late sixties (under the name "feminist Wicca") may seek other valid grounds for their practices, we at least owe it to those who have operated under a misapprehension to explain the truth, and let the chips fall where they may.

I believe there is a core of valid experience falling under the Wiccan-Neopagan heading, but that that core is the same essential core that lies at the truths exposed by the dreaded bogey-man Aleister Crowley and the 'wicked' pansexualism of Crowley's Law of Thelema. That such roots would be not just uncomfortable, but intolerable to the orthodox traditionalists among the Wiccans, but even more so among the hybrid feminist "Wiccans" may indeed be an understatement.

Neopaganism, in a now archaic "hippie" misreading of ecology, mistakes responsible stewardship of nature for nature worship. Ancient pagans did not 'worship' nature; to a large extent they were afraid of it, as has been pointed out to me by folk practitioners. Their "nature rites" were to propitiate the caprice of the gods, not necessarily to honor them. The first Neopagan revivalists, Gardner, Crowley and Dr. Murray, well understood this. Neopagan Wiccans usually do not.

In introducing a "goddess element" into their theology, Crowley and Gardner both understood the yin/yang, male/female fundamental polarity of the universe. Radical feminist Neopagans have taken this balance and altered it, however unintentionally, into a political feminist agenda, centered around a near-monotheistic worship of the female principle, in a bizarre caricature of patriarchal Christianity.

I do not say these things lightly; I have seen it happen in my own time. IF this be truth, let truth name its own price. I was not sure, until Norm and John got back from the Old Jail.

A couple of months earlier, scant days after hearing that I was to become a Gnostic Bishop and thus an heir to a corner of Crowley's legacy, I had punched on my answering machine, and there was the unexpected voice of John Turner saying that he had located what seemed to be the original Book of Shadows in an inventory list, locating it at Ripley's office in Toronto.

He said he didn't think they would sell it as an individual item, but he gave me the name of a top official in the Ripley organization, who I promptly contacted. I eventually made a substantial offer for the book, sight unseen, figuring there was (at the least) a likelihood I'd be able to turn the story into a book and get my money back out of it, to say nothing of the historical import.

But, as I researched the matter, I became more wary, and confused; Gardner's texts "A" "B" and "C" all seemed to be accounted for. Possibly, I began to suspect, this was either a duplicate of the "deThelemicised" post - 1954 version with segments written by Gardner and Valiente and copied and recopied (as well as distorted) from hand to hand since by Wiccans the world over.

Maybe, I mused, Valiente had one copy and Gardner another, the latter sold to Ripley with the Collection. Or, perhaps it was the curious notebook discovered by Aidan Kelly in the Ripley files called Ye Book of Ye Art Magical, the meaning of which was unclear.

While chatting with Ms. Deska, Norm returned from his mission, we introduced in businesslike fashion, and he told me he'd get the book, whatever it might be, from the vault.

The vault?! I sat there thinking God knows what. Recently, I'd gotten a call from Toronto, and it seems the Ripley folks wanted me to take a look at what they had. I had made a considerable offer, and at that point I figured I'd had at least a nibble. As it so happened Norm would be visiting on a routine inspection visit, so it was arranged he would bring the manuscript with him.

Almost from the minute he placed it in front of me, things began to make some kind of sense. Clearly, this was Ye Book of Ye Art Magical. Just as clearly, it was an unusual piece, written largely in the same hand as the Charter I had obtained earlier -- that is, in the hand of Gerald Gardner. Of this I became certain, because I had handwriting samples of Gardner, Valiente and Crowley in my possession. Ms. Valiente had been mindful of this when she wrote me, on August 8th, 1986:

I have deliberately chosen to write you in longhand, rather than send a typewritten reply, so that you will have something by which to judge the validity of the claim you tell me is being made by the Ripley organisation to have a copy of a "Book of Shadows" in Gerald Gardner's handwriting and mine. If this is..."Ye Book of Ye Art Magical,"this is definitely in Gerald Gardner's handwriting. Old Gerald, however, had several styles of

handwriting....I think it is probable that the whole MS. was in fact written by Gerald, and no other person was involved; but of course I may be wrong....

At first glance it appeared to be a very old book, and it suggested to me where the rumors that a very old, possibly medieval Book of Shadows had once been on display in Gardner's Museum had emerged from.

Any casual onlooker might see Ye Book in this light, for the cover was indeed that of an old volume, with the original title scratched out crudely on the side and a new title tooled into the leather cover. The original was some mundane volume, on Asian knives or something (an interest of Gardner's), but the inside pages had been removed, and a kind of notebook -- almost a journal -- had been substituted.

As far as I could see, no dates appear anywhere in the book. It is written in several different handwriting styles, although, as noted above, Doreen Valiente assured me that Gardner was apt to use several styles. I had the distinct impression this "note-book" had been written over a considerable period of time, perhaps years, perhaps even decades. It may, indeed, date from his days in the 1930s when he linked up with a NeoRosicrucian performance theatrical troupe, that could have included among its members the legendary Dorothy Clutterbuck, who set Gardner on the path which led to Wicca.

Thinking on it, what emerges from Ye Book of Ye Art Magical is a developmental set of ideas. Much of it is straight out of Crowley, but it is clearly the published Crowley, the old Magus of the OTO and A. . . A. . .

Somewhere along the line it hit me that I was not exactly looking at the "original Book of Shadows" but, perhaps, the outline Gardner prepared over a long period of time, apparently in secret (since Valiente, a relatively early initiate of Gardner's, never heard of it nor saw it, according to her own account, until recent years, about the time Aidan Kelly unearthed it in the Ripley collection long after Gardner's death).

Dr. Gardner kept many odd notebooks and scrapbooks that perhaps would reveal much about his character and motivations. Turner showed me a Gardner scrapbook in Ripley's store room which was mostly cheesecake magazine photographs and articles about actresses. Probably none are so evocative as Ye Book of Ye Art Magical, discovered hidden away in the back of an old sofa.

I have the impression it was essentially unknown in and after Gardner's lifetime, and that by the Summer of 1986 few had seen inside it; I knew of only Kelly and my own party. Perhaps the cover had been seen by some along the line, accounting for the rumor of a "very old Book of Shadows" in Gardner's Museum.

If someone had seen the charter unquestionably signed by Crowley ("Baphomet") but written by Gerald Gardner, and had gotten a look, as well, at Ye Book, they might well have concluded that Crowley had written BOTH, an honest error, but maybe the source of that long-standing accusation. There is even a notation in the Ripley catalog attributing the manuscript to Crowley on someone's say-so, but I have no indication Ripley has any other such book. Finally, if the notebook is a source book of any religious system, it is not

that of medieval witchcraft, but the Twentieth Century shining sanity of the famous Magus Aleister Crowley and the Thelemic/Gnostic creed of The Book of the Law.

As I sat there I read aloud familiar quotations or paraphrases from published material in the Crowley-Thelemic canon. This is not the "ancient religion of the Wise" but the modern sayings of "the Beast 666" as Crowley was wont to style himself.

But, does any of this invalidate Wicca as an expression of human spirituality? It depends on where one is coming from. Certainly, the foundations of Feminist Wicca and the modern cult of the goddess are challenged with the fact that the goddess in question is Nuit, her manifestation the sworn whore, Our Lady Babalon, the Scarlet Woman. Transform what you will shall be the whole of history, but THIS makes what Marx did to Hegel look like slavish devotion.

What Crowley himself said of this kind of witchcraft is not merely instructive, but an affront to the conceits of an era.

"The belief in witchcraft," he observed, "was not all superstition; its psychological roots were sound. Women who are thwarted in their natural instincts turn inevitably to all kinds of malignant mischief, from slander to domestic destruction..."

For those who neither worship nor are disdainful of the man who "made sexuality a god" or, at least, acknowledged it as such, experience must be its own teacher. If Wicca is a sort of errant Minerval encampment of the OTO, gone far astray and far afield since the days Crowley gave Gardner a charter he "didn't use" but seemed to value, and a whole range of rituals and imagery that assault the senses at their most literally fundamental level; if this is true or sort of true Mythos has its place and role, but so, too, does reality.

WICCA AS AN OTO ENCAMPMENT

It is of more than passing interest that the late Jack Parsons, one time Master of Agape Lodge OTO in California, began writing extensively of a revival of witchcraft from 1946 on; that is, at about the time of Crowley and Gardner's acknowledged association. Crowley referred to Dr. Gardner and his OTO encampment in private correspondence almost to the time of his death, and spoke of it with optimism and enthusiasm.

When Lady Harris wrote Karl Germer that she believed Gardner was the head of the OTO in Europe after Crowley's death, Germer didn't refute her; he simply indicated he hoped to see Gardner during his U.S. visit, which he did. Furthermore, as alluded to in the previous section, Gardner himself claimed in a letter written shortly after Crowley's death that he WAS, in fact, the head of the OTO in Europe.

The letter to Vernon Symonds, sent from Memphis, Tennessee where Gardner was then resident, and dated December 24, 1947, asserts that "... Aleister gave me a charter making me head of the O.T.O. in Europe. Now I want to get any papers about this that Aleister had; he had some typescript Rituals, I know. I have them, too, but I don't want his to fall into other people's hands..." I am editing Gardner's spelling with great kindness. This

claim should be viewed with a grain of salt, but Lady Harris and Gardner were both intimate Crowley associates, and this should be kept in mind. The Charter in question referred to by Gardner is probably the one now in my possession. He almost certainly had no other.

The question of intent looms large in the background of this inquiry. If I had to guess, I would venture that Gerald Gardner did, in fact, invent Wicca more or less whole cloth, to be a popularized version of the OTO. Crowley, and his immediate successor Karl Germer, who also knew Dr. Gardner, likely set "old Gerald" on what they intended to be a Thelemic path, aimed at reestablishing at least a basic OTO encampment in England.

It is also possible, but yet unproved, that, upon expelling Kenneth Grant from the OTO in England, Germer, in the early 1950s, summoned Gardner back to America to interview him as a candidate for leading the British OTO. Gardner, it is confirmed, came to America, but by then Wicca, and Dr. Gardner had begun to take their own, watered-down course.

Let me close this section by quoting two interesting tidbits for your consideration.

First consider Doreen Valiente's observation to me concerning "the Parsons connection". I quote from her letter above mentioned, one of several she was kind enough to send me in 1986 in connection with my research into this matter.

...I did know about the existence of the O.T.O. Chapter in California at the time of Crowley's death, because I believe his ashes were sent over to them. He was cremated here in Brighton, you know, much to the scandal of the local authorities, who objected to the 'pagan funeral service.' If you are referring to the group of which Jack Parsons was a member (along with the egregious Mr. L. Ron Hubbard), then there is another curious little point to which I must draw your attention. I have a remarkable little book by Jack Parsons called *MAGICK, GNOSTICISM AND THE WITCHCRAFT*. It is unfortunately undated, but Parsons died in 1952. The section on witchcraft is particularly interesting because it looks forward to a revival of witchcraft as the Old Religion....I find this very thought provoking. Did Parsons write this around the time that Crowley was getting together with Gardner and perhaps communicated with the California group to tell them about it? Parsons began forecasting the "revival of Witchcraft" in the notorious "Liber 49 - The Book of Babalon" written in 1946. The timing of the genesis of "The Book of Babalon" -- which forecast a 'revival' of witchcraft in covens based on the number eleven (the Thelemic number of magick) rather than the traditional thirteen, seems to coincide with Crowley's OTO Charter to Gardner, Gardner's U.S. visit, and also coincides rather closely with the writing of *HIGH MAGIC'S AID* by Gardner.

We must remember that Ms. Valiente was a close associate of Gardner and is a dedicated and active Wiccan. She, of course, has her own interpretation of these matters.

The other matter of note is the question of the length of Gardner's association with the OTO and with Crowley personally. My informant Col. Lawrence, tells me that he has in his possession a cigarette case which once belonged to Aleister Crowley. Inside "is a note

in Crowley's hand that says simply: 'gift of GBG, 1936, A. Crowley'." (Personal letter, 6 December, 1986)

The inscription could be a mistake, it could mean 1946, the period of the Charter. But, as Ms. Valiente put it in a letter to me of 8th December, 1986:

If your friend is right, then it would mean that old Gerald actually went through a charade of pretending to Arnold Crowther that Arnold was introducing him to Crowley for the first time - a charade which Crowley for some reason was willing to go along with. Why? I can't see the point of such a pretense; but then occultists sometimes do devious things...

Gnosticism and Wicca, the subjects of Jack Parsons' essays, republished by the OTO and Falcon Press in 1990, are the two most successful expressions to date of Crowley's dream of a popular solar-phallic religion. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think Aleister and Gerald may have cooked Wicca up. The issues for Thelemites AND Wiccans here are, as I see it, two - fold:

If Wicca is the OTO's prodigal daughter in fact, authorized directly by Crowley, how should they now relate to this?

Then too, what are we to make of and infer about all this business of a popular Thelemic-Gnostic religion? Were Crowley, Parsons, Gardner and others trying to do something of note with regard to actualizing a New Aeon here which bears scrutiny? Or is this mere speculation, and of little significance for the Great Work today?

If the Charter Crowley issued Gardner is, indeed, the authority upon which Wicca has been built for half a century, then it is perhaps no coincidence that I acquired that Charter in the same year I was consecrated a Bishop of the Gnostic Catholic Church. Further, it was literally only days after my long search for the original of Gardner's BOOK OF SHADOWS ended in success that the Holy Synod of T Michael Bertiaux's branch of the Gnostic Church unanimously elected me a Missionary Bishop, on August 29, 1986.

Sometimes, I muse, the Inner Order revoked Wicca's charter in 1986, placing it, so to speak, in my hands. Since I hold it in Trust, perhaps Wicca has, in symbolic form, returned home at last. It remains for the Wiccans, literally (since the charter hangs in my temple space), to read the handwriting on the wall.

Personal letters referenced in this essay

Aleister Crowley to W.B.C., May 30, 1947
Frieda Harris to Frederic Mellinger, December 7, 1947
Gerald Gardner to Vernon Symonds, December 24, 1947
Frieda Harris to Karl Germer, January 2, 1948
Karl Germer to Freida Harris, January 19, 1948
Doreen Valiente to Allen Greenfield, August 8, 1986

Doreen Valiente to Allen Greenfield, August 28, 1986
Doreen Valiente to Allen Greenfield, December 8, 1986

* I am indebted to Frater Y.V. for a rare, autographed copy of the 1949 Michael Houghton Edition of HIGH MAGIC'S AID by "Scier" (that is, Gardner) identified as "O.T.O. 4 = 7" on the title page. This is likely a confusion of A. ' . A . ' . and OTO titles; it is doubtful that Gardner was a VIIo in the OTO. He was, however, at least a P.I. in OTO, and may have been a VII (as Crowley indicated in a late letter that he anticipated the Gardner Lodge of OTO in London could be expected to initiate as high as the P.I. Degree.)